

*Washington, DC* - Congressman Maurice Hinchey (D-NY) today announced that the House Natural Resources Committee will hold a vote on Wednesday, February 10, 2010 on a bill he introduced last year that would authorize the National Park Service (NPS) to conduct a study on whether the Hudson River Valley should become a unit of the National Park system. The scheduled vote on Hinchey's bill, H.R. 4003 -- the Hudson River Valley Special Resource Study Act, follows a January 21 hearing on the bill held by the House Natural Resources Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests and Public Lands.

"This bill is clearly gaining momentum in Congress and I'm hopeful that the House Natural Resources Committee will pass it overwhelmingly so that we can move one very important step closer to authorizing a study to examine whether the Hudson River Valley would be a good fit as a unit of the National Park Service," Hinchey said. "As a unit of the National Park Service, the Hudson River Valley would have an elevated national stature, while also being in line for additional federal funding and support that otherwise would not be available."

In order for the Hudson River Valley to become part of the National Park System, a congressionally-authorized NPS study must be conducted. Hinchey's legislation would authorize such a study from Fort Edward in Washington County down through Westchester County. If the NPS's study finds that the Hudson River Valley would be a good fit as part of the National Park System then subsequent legislation would be needed to make that designation. Hinchey said he would immediately introduce the necessary legislation.

Hinchey's bill outlines specific guidelines to ensure that the NPS study recognizes the realities of the Hudson River Valley. These guidelines require the NPS to closely examine park unit models, in particular national river and recreation areas, as well as other landscape protection models, that: encompass large areas of non-federal lands within their designated boundaries; foster public and private collaborative arrangements for achieving NPS objectives, and protect and respect the rights of private land owners. No forced land acquisition activities would be permitted.

Hinchey has long sought greater recognition, protection, and resources for the Hudson River Valley. As a member of the New York State Assembly, Hinchey authored the legislation that led to the creation of the Hudson River Valley Greenway and in Congress he authored legislation that led to the designation of the Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area, which provides technical assistance to local communities or local managers to assist them in managing natural and historic sites of national importance.

